

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

CIVIL MINUTES - GENERAL

Case No.	CV 18-4658 PA (GJSx)	Date	May 29, 2018
Title	James West, et al. v. Ford Motor Company, et al.		

Present: The Honorable	PERCY ANDERSON, UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE		
Kamilla Sali-Suleyman	Not Reported	N/A	
Deputy Clerk	Court Reporter	Tape No.	
Attorneys Present for Plaintiff:		Attorneys Present for Defendant:	
None		None	

Proceedings: IN CHAMBERS - COURT ORDER

Before the Court is a Notice of Removal filed by defendant Ford Motor Company (“Defendant”) on May 25, 2018. Defendant asserts that this Court has jurisdiction over the action brought against it by plaintiffs James and Kristin West (“Plaintiffs”) based on the Court’s diversity jurisdiction. See 28 U.S.C. § 1332.

Federal courts are courts of limited jurisdiction, having subject matter jurisdiction only over matters authorized by the Constitution and Congress. See, e.g., Kokkonen v. Guardian Life Ins. Co., 511 U.S. 375, 377, 114 S. Ct. 1673, 1675, 128 L. Ed. 2d 391 (1994). A suit filed in state court may be removed to federal court if the federal court would have had original jurisdiction over the suit. 28 U.S.C. § 1441(a). A removed action must be remanded to state court if the federal court lacks subject matter jurisdiction. 28 U.S.C. § 1447(c). “The burden of establishing federal jurisdiction is on the party seeking removal, and the removal statute is strictly construed against removal jurisdiction.” Prize Frize, Inc. v. Matrix (U.S.) Inc., 167 F.3d 1261, 1265 (9th Cir. 1999). “Federal jurisdiction must be rejected if there is any doubt as to the right of removal in the first instance.” Gaus v. Miles, Inc., 980 F.2d 564, 566 (9th Cir. 1992).

In attempting to invoke this Court’s diversity jurisdiction, Defendant must prove that there is complete diversity of citizenship between the parties and that the amount in controversy exceeds \$75,000. 28 U.S.C. § 1332. To establish citizenship for diversity purposes, a natural person must be a citizen of the United States and be domiciled in a particular state. Kantor v. Wellesley Galleries, Ltd., 704 F.2d 1088, 1090 (9th Cir. 1983). Persons are domiciled in the places they reside with the intent to remain or to which they intend to return. See Kanter v. Warner-Lambert Co., 265 F.3d 853, 857 (9th Cir. 2001). For the purposes of diversity jurisdiction, a corporation is a citizen of any state where it is incorporated and of the state where it has its principal place of business. 28 U.S.C. § 1332(c); see also Indus. Tectonics, Inc. v. Aero Alloy, 912 F.2d 1090, 1092 (9th Cir. 1990).

The Notice of Removal alleges that “[a]t the time of the filing of this action and the filing of this Notice of Removal, the Plaintiffs were and are residents of the County of KERN, State of California and

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were and are, therefore, citizens of the State of California. (See Exh. ‘A’ (Complaint, paragraphs marked ‘Preliminary Statement.’).” (Notice of Removal ¶ 4.) Defendant’s support for its allegations concerning Plaintiffs’ citizenship rely solely on the Complaint, which alleges only that “Plaintiffs are residents of Kern County, California,” and does not allege Plaintiffs’ states of domicile or citizenship. Because an individual is not necessarily domiciled where he or she resides, Defendant’s allegations concerning the citizenship of Plaintiffs, based on an allegation of residence, are insufficient to establish Plaintiffs’ citizenship. “Absent unusual circumstances, a party seeking to invoke diversity jurisdiction should be able to allege affirmatively the actual citizenship of the relevant parties.” Kanter, 265 F.3d at 857; Bradford v. Mitchell Bros. Truck Lines, 217 F. Supp. 525, 527 (N.D. Cal. 1963) (“A petition [for removal] alleging diversity of citizenship upon information and belief is insufficient.”). As a result, Defendant’s allegations related to Plaintiffs’ citizenship are insufficient to invoke this Court’s diversity jurisdiction.

For the foregoing reasons, Defendant has failed to satisfy its burden of showing that diversity jurisdiction exists over this action. Accordingly, this action is hereby remanded to Los Angeles County Superior Court, Case No. BC703087, for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. See 28 U.S.C. § 1447(c).

IT IS SO ORDERED.